EXHIBIT A

From: Laszlo M Szabo <laz@temple.edu>
Date: Friday, August 13, 2021 at 10:41 AM
To: Steve Houser <steven.houser@temple.edu>
Cc: "Michele M. Masucci" <michele.masucci@temple.edu>, La'Shay Cobb <lashay.cobb@temple.edu>
Subject: Research Misconduct Site Visit

Dear Dr. Houser:

I write to advise you of a mandatory site-visit scheduled for 8/17/2021 at 08:00 at MERB 1041 as a part of the University's response to a research misconduct allegation requested of the University by NIH's Office of Research Integrity. Based on a preliminary review, further information is required and needs to be obtained through the research records. I am aware that you had provided a set of research records to Dr. Masucci earlier. Additional records are required beyond those. It is imperative that you be available. The site visit team and I will meet with you, and possibly others on the research team, including touring your lab space(s), ideally at 08:30.

Please be ready to provide and discuss the following:

1. Location of lab spaces, office spaces, and other research spaces where relevant research records may be located (e.g., MERB 10th floor, #1082A).
    a. Research records include, but are not limited to: computer stored data, images, and other digital information; lab notebooks and other written records, emails whether on Temple's email or other email addresses (e.g., if you use your personal email for Temple research) and any other records of any type (e.g., gels, data generated from instruments). These should be original research records, not merely copies of them (e.g., original preserved gels, actual lab notebooks).

2. Names of individuals who were involved in any way in the research, whether at Temple or at other institutions (e.g., graduate students, undergraduate students, post-Doctoral researchers, etc.).

3. Be ready to provide all research records, in their original form.

Once the site visit team meets with you, together with you, we will then visit all research spaces where you can orient us to the spaces, provide access to research records, introduce to others on the research team (if relevant), and provide information and access to other areas or devices where research records exist. Please be aware that if you are unable to meet with the site visit team, we will have to proceed with the site visit without you. To ensure that we obtain all relevant research records, it is therefore critical that you are present so that we can promote a comprehensive, holistic, and credible response by the University to the federal Office for Research Integrity.

I look forward to meeting you. If you have any questions, please respond to this email or contact me on my work cell phone: 1-267-347-9828.

The relevant grants and articles are:

Grants:

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Institutes of Health (NIH), grants, R01 HL128446, R01 HL139889, R01 HL145177, and R01 HL 111278.

Articles and all figures in the articles: below and as attached:

1. Sabri A. Rafiq K. Seqqat R. Kolpakov MA. Dillon R. Dell'italia LJ. Sympathetic activation causes focal adhesion signaling alteration in early compensated volume overload attributable to isolated mitral regurgitation in the dog. *Circ Res.* 2008 May 9:102(9):1127-36 (hereafter referred to as "*Circ Res.* 2008a").

2. Kolpakov MA. Seqqat R. Rafiq K. Xi H. Margulies KB. Libonali JR. Powel P. Houser SR. Dell'italia LJ. Sabri A. Pleiotropic effects of neutrophils on myocytes apoptosis and left ventricular remodeling during early volume overload. *J Mol Cell Cardiol.* 2009:47(5):634-45 (hereafter referred to as "*J Mol Cell Cardiol.* 2009").

3. Kolpakov MA. Sikder K. Sarkar A. Chaki S. Shukla SK. Guo X. Qi Z. Barbery C. Sabri A. Rafiq K. Inflammatory Serine Proteases Play a Critical Role in the Early Pathogenesis of Diabetic Cardiomyopathy. *Cell Physiol Biochem.* 2019:53(6):982-98 (hereafter referred to as "*Cell Physiol Biochem.* 2019").

4. Rafiq K. Kolpakov MA. Abdelfettah M. Streblow DN. Hassid A. Dell'italia LJ. Sabri A. Role of protein-tyrosine phosphatase SHP2 in focal adhesion kinase down-regulation during neutrophil cathepsin G-induced cardiomyocytes anoikis. *J Biol Chem.* 2006 Jul 14:281(28):19781-92 (hereafter referred to as "*J Biol Chem.* 2006").

5. Guo X. Kolpakov MA. Hooshdaran B. Schappell W. Wang T. Eguchi S. Elliott KJ. Tilley DG. Rao K. Andrade-Gordon P. Bunce M. Madhu C. Houser SR. Abdelkarim S. Cardiac Expression of Factor X Mediates Cardiac Hypertrophy and Fibrosis in Pressure Overload. Fig. 7A splicing indicia in TGF. *JACC Basic Transl Sci.* 2020 Jan 27:5(1):69-83 (hereafter referred to as "*JACC Basic Transl Sci.* 2020").

6. Miller S-A. Kolpakov MA. Guo X. Du B. Nguyen Y. Wang T. Powel P. Dell'italia LJ. Sabri A. Intracardiac administration of neutrophil protease cathepsin G activates noncanonical inflammasome pathway and promotes inflammation and pathological remodeling in non-injured heart. *J Mol Cell Cardiol.* 2019 Sep:134:29-39 (hereafter referred to as "*J Mol Cell Cardiol.* 2019").

7. Seqqat R. Guo X. Rafiq K. Kolpakov MA. Guo J. Koch WJ. Houser SR. Dell'italia LJ. Sabri A. Beta1-adrenergic receptors promote focal adhesion signaling downregulation and myocyte apoptosis in acute volume overload. *J Mol Cel Cardiol.* 2012 Aug:53(2):240-9 (hereafter referred to as "*J Mol Cell Cardiol.* 2012").

8. Kolpakov MA. Rafiq K. Guo X. Hooshdaran B. Wang T. Vlasenko L. Bashkirova YV. Zhang X. Chen X. Iftikhar S. Libonati JR. Kunapuli SP. Sabri A. *J Mol Cell Cardiol.* 2016 Jan:90:21-9 (hereafter referred to as "*J Mol Cell Cardiol.* 2016").

9. Rafiq K. Kolpakov MA. Seqqat R. Guo J. Guo X. Qi Z. Yu D. Mohapatra B. Zutshi N. An W. Band H. Sanjay A. Houser SR. Sabri A. c-Cbl inhibition improves cardiac function and survival in response to myocardial ischemia. *Circulation* 2014 May 20:129(2):2031-43 (hereafter referred to as "*Circulation* 2014").

10. Rafiq K. Hanscom M. Valerie K. Steinberg SF. Sabri A. Novel mode for neutrophil protease cathepsin G-mediated signaling: membrane shedding of epidermal growth factor is required for cardiomyocyte anoikis. *Circulation Res.* 2008 Jan 4: 102(1):32-41 (hereafter referred to as "*Circulation Res.* 2008b").

11. Rafiq K. Guo J. Vlasenko L. Guo X. Kolpakov MA. Sanjay A. Houser SR. Sabri A. c-Cbl ubiquitin ligase regulates focal adhesion protein turnover and myofibril degeneration induced by neutrophil protease cathepsin G. *J Biol Chem.* 2012 Feb 17:287(8):5327-39 (hereafter referred to as "*J Biol Chem.* 2012").

12. Mohsin S. Troupes CD. Starosta T. Sharp TE. Agra EJ. Smith S. Duran JM. Zalavadia N. Zhou Y. Kubo H. Berretta RM. Houser SR. Unique Features of Cortical Bone Stem Cells Associated With Repair of the Injured Heart. *Circulation Res.* 2015:117(12):1024-33 (hereafter referred to as *Circulation Res.* 2015").

13. de Lucia C. Gambino G. Petraglia L. Elia A. Komici K. Fenumenella GD. D'Amico ML. Formisano R. Borghetti G. Liccardo D. Nolano M. Houser SR. Leosco D. Ferrara N. Koch WJ. Rengo G. Long-Term Caloric Restriction Improves Cardiac Function. Remodeling. Adrenergic Responsiveness. and Sympathetic Innervation in a Model of Postischemic Heart Failure. *Circ Heart Fail.* 2018 Mar:11(3):e004153 (hereafter referred to as "*Circ Heart Fail.* 2018").

14. Nelson BR. Makarewich CA. Anderson DM. Winders BR. Troupes CD. Fenton W. Reese AL. McAnally JR. Chen X. Kavalai ET. Cannon SC. Houser SR. Bassel-Duby R. Olson EN. A peptide encoded by a transcript annotated as long noncoding RNA enhances SERCA activity in muscle. *Science* 2016:351(6270):271-5 (hereafter referred to as "*Science* 2016").

15. Ganhirajan RK. Meng S. Chandramoorthy HC. Mallilankaraman K. Mancarella S. Gao H. Razmpour R. Yang X-F. Houser SR. Chen J. Koch WJ. Wang H. Sobologg J. Gill DL. Madesh M. Blockade of NOX2 and STIM1 signaling limits lipopolysaccharide-included vascular inflammation. *J Clin Invest.* 2013:123(2):887-902 (hereafter referred to as "*J Clin Invest.* 2013").

And other related grants and articles if discovered to be further relevant.

Because of the seriousness and sensitivity of the situation, do not discuss this matter with anyone, including colleagues. Additionally, please preserve and maintain any and all records regarding your research, including electronic information such as emails, phone texts, Slack or MSTeam chats, Western Blots, etc.. As you may be aware, under applicable federal regulations the absence or unavailability of such records may in and of itself contribute to a finding of research misconduct (e.g., 42 CFR 93.106) and so it is imperative that you maintain these records.

Finally, please note that all participants in the site visit, including yourself, will adhere to the University's Covid-19 health and safety measures (e.g., https://www.temple.edu/coronavirus).

Respectfully Yours,

László

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László M. Szabó, Esq. (he/him/his)

Associate Vice President for Research Compliance

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https://research.temple.edu/

Nothing in this email is advice of legal counsel.